

MAR 24 1967

# OAK RIDGE NATIONAL LABORATORY

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NUCLEAR DIVISION



POST OFFICE BOX X

OAK RIDGE, TENNESSEE 37830

March 21, 1967

Dr. Joshua Lederberg  
Stanford University  
Stanford, California

Dear Dr. Lederberg:

As a social scientist in a natural science environment, I very much welcomed the viewpoint which you forcefully expressed in your "Eutechnics-Motif for New Technology" article in the January 23, 1967, issue of Technology Week. The goals implicit in the other articles in the issue indicate the relative uniqueness of your perspective.

On one level I agree that the problem is one of value priority ("a moral issue"). However, the de facto absence of the human conditions which follow from technological actions as the prime criterion of the effectiveness of scientific and technological actions is rooted in the cultural frameworks of this society and in the personal emphases they induce. Several examples of these seem particularly germane to your argument: (1) a reward structure which favors immediate activity in contrast to planning for long-term futures with the delay for hard thought which sound planning involves; (2) the anxiety reducing consensus among applied scientists that they are not responsible for the general effects of their deeds, that is, invention is the line beyond which their job does not extend; (3) the suspicion and lack of trust of technologists for those who skills are in the area of "human facilitation," whether these be in administration of intellectuals or in psychotherapy; (4) the lack of the ego strength to critically review the soundness of established directions of national effort, whether these directions involved deterrence or transportation hardware; (5) a need achievement orientation which directs individuals to pursue questions which, while not easy, are probably answerable in terms acceptable to peers; these questions tend to be those of hardware rather than those of purpose.

The problem here, as in many other areas of human behavior, is that the longer we act according to such premises, the more difficult and painful it becomes to shift gears before a crisis occurs. This is

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all the more the case because the shift you call for is not realized by polemic or sporadic value expression but rather by sustained intellectual effort. How could one achieve such a shift? First, I do not think that many of the present activists in applied technology will lend themselves to a new mode or have the capability to do so. The few that do will probably make fundamental errors in their assessments of human needs and responses, assessments for which they have no particular skill. Second, I do think that a significant number, enough for critical mass, of advanced graduate students and young professionals in the behavioral sciences, biology and ecology are sufficiently concerned with the problems you state to lend themselves to a pilot effort(s) to demonstrate the feasibility of planning and developing the instruments for realizing a new human design. However, they do not see any personally feasible way of translating their dissatisfaction with present trends into effective professional activities. Third, I think that a sizeable number of those who were associated with calls for human maximization efforts in the thirties (as enunciated particularly by Mannheim and Merriam) would lend their support to pilot efforts, for example, Harold Lasswell. Fourth, we need someone of recognized scientific eminence to attempt a demonstration of "eumanics" characterized by all the visibility and self-examination which an experiment for learning should involve.

If you are engaged in such a demonstration, I'd appreciate receiving the working papers which result. If you are not, why not start one?

Sincerely,



Davis B. Bobrow  
Senior Social Scientist  
Director's Division

DBB:pd

P.S. Please give my regards to Sid Liebes.